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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002256

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SU](#) [SL](#) [ZI](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: CONFLICT RESOLUTION - "AFRICAN-STYLE"

REF: A. STATE 153144

[1](#)B. STATE 153894

[1](#)C. ABUJA 2253

(U) Classified by CDA Andrews; Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: CDA, accompanied by PolMilOff, called on the Special Presidential Envoy for Conflict Resolution, Ambassador Raph Uwechue, to discuss Sudan developments (Refs A and B). Uwechue welcomed the appointment of Senator Danforth as a signal of U.S. interest in Sudan and Africa. He described African conflict resolution as based on emotion rather than calculation, and described President Obasanjo's most recent efforts in Sierra Leone as an example. Finally, he gave his insights into Zimbabwe, arguing for the need to strike a balance between competing interests. Bio information in paras 5-8. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) SPECIAL ENVOY APPOINTMENT: Uwechue stated that the appointment of Senator Danforth was welcome and an indication of "how seriously the Administration takes Sudan." He also noted that Nigeria was interested to work with the U.S. to resolve conflicts generally, and that with so much in common, the two countries could build greater understanding. Moreover, in describing countries as mammals, "the U.S. is like an elephant," Uwechue said, "it carries a lot of weight and leaves a big footprint." The U.S. could make a dent, Uwechue opined, when others could not do so. However, such weight imposed the responsibility to step carefully.

[1](#)3. (C) CONFLICT RESOLUTION AFRICA-STYLE: Uwechue described African conflict resolution as based on emotion, rather than, pointing to his head and smiling, "your computers." He elaborated that with Africans, once you make a personal connection, you can ask of them almost anything, and "sort out the details later." Turning to Sierra Leone, Uwechue briefly discussed his trip with President Obasanjo on September 3, which he described as historic, particularly noting the meeting of Presidents Kabbah (with his FM), Obasanjo (with Uwechue) and Konare (with his MOJ) with four RUF leaders (he named Sessay and Massoquoi) in Kono. He said the GOSL had agreed to open a RUF liaison office in Freetown to "keep the communication lines open."

[1](#)4. (C) ZIMBABWE: Uwechue opined that any solution on Zimbabwe would have to strike a balance between the claims of both sides. He noted that the "settlers" were not colonialists but Zimbabweans, and that they were critical to the Zimbabwean economy. However, black Zimbabwean farmers wanted access to lands once held by their ancestors. Uwechue pointed to his arm and noted that Americans, whether of African descent and with dark skin or of Scandinavian descent and with white skin, were all Americans. Likewise, he stated, Africans, whether the Arabs living in North Africa, whites in southern Africa, or black Africans, were all Africans. for reporting on the Abuja Commonwealth Ministerial, see Ref C (notal).

[1](#)5. (C) BIOGRAPHICAL INFO: Ambassador Raphael Uwechue was born in 1935 at Ogwashi-Uku, Delta State. He attended primary school at Holy Family School in Sokoto and St. Peter's Primary School, Ogwashi-Uku, Delta State. He received secondary education at St. John's (Rimi) College in Kaduna, where he became fluent in Hausa. He attended University College, Ibadan from 1956-60, and graduated with honors in history. He later pursued post-graduate studies in International Law and French at the Institute of Higher International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

[1](#)6. (C) Uwechue joined the Nigerian Foreign Service at independence in 1960, and served in Cameroon, Pakistan and Mali. He was Nigeria's first diplomatic envoy to France, where he opened the Nigerian Embassy in Paris as Charge in [1](#)1966. He left the Service at the start of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967, when he became the Biafran representative to France, but resigned this post in 1968 in protest against what he described as "Biafran inflexibility." He did not

return to Nigeria for over 10 years. Uwechue was Minister of Health from October to December of 1983 during Shagari's second administration. In 1993, he was active in the Delta State SDP (his bio describes him as a close confidant of Chief M.K.O. Abiola). He was the Vice-Chairman of NADECO Abroad from 1994-1998. Uwechue was appointed into his present position as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in 1999, with the title of Special Presidential Envoy on Conflict Resolution in Africa. He said he was comfortable in London but returned to Nigeria because he believed in President Obasanjo's program for reform and the elimination of corruption.

17. (C) Uwechue has been publisher and Editor-in-Chief of such publications as "Africa Magazine," "Afrique Magazine," "Africa Woman Magazine," and the "Know Africa" series of books. He has authored several books, including, "Reflection on the Nigeria Civil War," "Africa Ohne Burgerkrieg," "'L'Avenir du Biafra," and "The Awareness of History among Indigenous African Communities."

18. (C) Ambassador Uwechue speaks English, Hausa and French. He lived for 25 years in London. He is easy-going, warm and well-spoken.

19. (U) Freetown minimize considered.
Andrews